

Dominika Oliwa

**DEFENDING THE CATHOLIC FAITH OR SPREADING INTOLERANCE?  
THE SERMON DELIVERED DURING AUTO-DA-FÉ IN 17TH-CENTURY PORTUGAL  
AS AN EXAMPLE OF ANTI-JEWISH LITERATURE**

**Keywords:** the auto-da-fé, the Inquisition, conversion, anti-Judaism, Portugal

**Abstract:** One of the activities of the Inquisition most visible to ordinary people was called the auto-da-fé – a public confession of faith. Such ceremonies, held by the Inquisition Tribunal, were composed of several parts. One of the most significant parts of the ceremony was the sermon. Many of these sermons seemingly focused on Jewish issues, even if only a few of the condemned were accused of converting to Judaism. To whom, and for what purpose, were the sermons addressed? What were their character, role, and impact on society? Can we interpret them as a typical example of anti-Jewish literature, and a specific “invitation to intolerance”? This article aims to outline the subject matter of the sermons delivered during the auto-da-fé ceremony in Portugal, particularly their anti-Jewish aspect. Reference is made to texts of ten sermons made during autos-da-fé held in the three biggest centers of 17th-century Inquisition activity in Portugal (Lisbon, Coimbra and Évora), as well as the colony of Goa.

One of the activities of the Inquisition most visible to ordinary people was called the auto-da-fé – a public confession of faith. Such ceremonies, held by the Inquisition Tribunal, were composed of several parts and lasted up to two days. Contrary to common belief, the executions made famous by burning at the stake those who refused to confess or convert to Catholicism were not a part of autos-da-fé. Moreover, those executions and the institution of the Inquisition were not officially linked. During another part of the auto-da-fé, those who refused to confess were delivered to secular authorities (see *relaxamento ao braço secular*) to beg for clemency and mercy.<sup>1</sup> However, in practice this simply meant a death sentence, which could not be officially pronounced by the Inquisition Tribunal. The executions were held after the ceremony of the auto-da-fé, in a different part of town, usually on a riverbank. It may be that the auto-da-fé was mistakenly linked to burning at the stake because executions very often took place on the same day and were open to the public.

It seems to be very difficult to understand the idea of the modern auto-da-fé without understanding its character itself, as well as a comparison with its medieval predecessor. In the Middle Ages, the Inquisition was the only Church institution whose objective was to suppress heresy. It was based on the activity of particular inquisitors, who were completely independent of state authorities, even though they cooperated with secular bodies. In medieval Portugal, active inquisitors were not common – only two or three cases

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<sup>1</sup> Ribeiro 1998: 99–101.

are known, and their details are still unclear. The Inquisition, established in 1536 at the request of the Portuguese authorities, was a developed institution with enormous bureaucratic machinery. Although based on the framework of Church structures, the monarch controlled the Inquisition. What is more, it was created for the purposes of both the state and the monarch. The latter could display his prestige, improve the position of the state authorities, and emphasize his own role in the fight for state religious purity during the auto-da-fé ceremony. It can be described as a propaganda performance for both the state and the Church.

Modern autos were large-scale public ceremonies which required weeks of preparation and involved many participants of different social status. First, lists were prepared of the condemned persons who were supposed to confess their faith during the ceremony. Then, the time and place of the auto was communicated to parishes as a way of inviting citizens to take part in the ceremony. Finally, a place was specially prepared for this purpose. Usually a platform was set up in the main town square. The platform was surrounded by stands for spectators, as well as lodges for the royal family, church dignitaries and other distinguished guests. Officials also provided food and satisfied other needs. Archives provide interesting documentation describing these preparations, including the expenses of foodstuffs served to the inquisitors.<sup>2</sup> The ceremony was composed of several parts, which followed a specific order. Assuming that the auto-da-fé was a performance, it was based on a strict script. The first part was a procession preceded by representatives of monastic communities, followed by the condemned wearing penitential garments and carrying candles in their hands and representatives of the Holy Office. The procession wound its way from the Inquisition's dungeons to the square, where the condemned were brought to the platform. Later, a chosen bishop sermonized and read out punishments, ranging from light to severe. The condemned made a public confession of their faith, and afterward obtained official forgiveness of their sins. Finally, condemned persons who refused to confess their faith were delivered to secular authorities. This was the last part of the ceremony. Delivering the condemned to the place of execution, and the execution itself, were not parts of the auto-da-fé. The first auto-da-fé was held in Lisbon (Portugal) on September 20, 1540 and the last ceremony took place in 1766 in the same place.

One of the most significant parts of the ceremony was the sermon. Many of these sermons seemingly focused on Jewish issues, even if only a few of the condemned were accused of converting to Judaism. To whom, and for what purpose were the sermons addressed? What were their character, role, and impact on society? Can we interpret them as a typical example of anti-Jewish literature, and a specific "invitation to intolerance"?<sup>3</sup> This article aims to outline the subject matter of the sermons delivered during auto-da-fé ceremonies in Portugal, particularly their anti-Jewish aspect. References include texts of ten sermons made during autos-da-fé held in the three biggest centers of 17th-century Inquisition activity in Portugal (Lisbon, Coimbra and Évora), as well as the colony of Goa.

It should be emphasized that sermons were an important form of communication, and later developed as a separate genre of the Baroque period. In both Portugal and other countries, sermons were a rich source of information for society, particularly the lower classes. Because the Church enjoyed absolute respect, sermons were used as a tool to

<sup>2</sup> Braga 2006: 177–178.

<sup>3</sup> Expression based on the title of Edward Glaser's paper: Glaser 1956: 327–385; cf. *idem* 1955: 53–96.

manipulate the public's mood and behavior, and to influence public opinion for different purposes.<sup>4</sup> The sermons delivered during autos-da-fé in Portugal are found in the Baroque parenthesis. Preachers were selected by the Supreme Council of the Inquisition from among the candidates recommended by local tribunals.<sup>5</sup> The sermons, which were preached "at the request" of the Holy Office, can be categorized as follows: *sermões da fé* (delivered during pastoral visits of inquisitors) and *sermões do auto* (prepared specially for the ceremony of the auto-da-fé). It is known that from the 16th century Inquisition regulations stipulated which topics were accepted in *sermões da fé*; however, no regulations concerning *sermões de auto* have been found. As a result, preachers had more influence over the content of these sermons. Most preachers were either Jesuits or Dominicans (the name *Dominicanos* was very often used as a synonym to *Ordem dos Pregadores*, that is the Order of Preachers), but on title pages other names can be found as well, including Carmelites, Hieronymites, Bernardines, and Franciscans. In addition, not all clergymen agreed with the views expressed in the sermons.

Among sermons preached during autos-da-fé, two periods can be distinguished: the 16th-century sermons preserved only in the form of manuscripts, and the post-16th-century sermons printed to make them more available to a specific target audience. Scholar Maria Lucília Gonçalves Pires has identified three sermons, of 1576, 1589 and 1585.<sup>6</sup> There are few differences between the later texts. The first printed sermon was delivered by Padre Estevão de Santa Ana in Coimbra in 1612, whereas Padre Manuel da Anunciação in Lisbon preached the last preserved one in 1749. Today, 68 printed auto-da-fé sermons can be found in several different towns. Coimbra is home to 21 sermons; the first sermon was preached in 1612, the last in 1727. Lisbon's collected sermons number 24; the first dates to 1621, and the last to 1749. Évora houses 17 such sermons; the earliest is from 1615, and the most recent dates to 1710. The Goa archives hold four sermons, whose dates of publication stretch from 1617 to 1672. Aveiro and Tomar boast one sermon apiece, dating from 1618 and 1619 respectively.<sup>7</sup> Saraiva emphasizes that the preserved printed sermons were very popular with civic audiences, and "*were sought after by the public simply as adventure or voyage stories.*"<sup>8</sup>

Who received the sermons, and to whom were they addressed? Upon reading the texts, three specific groups can be identified: state authorities and representatives of the Inquisition Tribunal, representatives of society gathered for the ceremony, and the condemned persons themselves (New Christians, often referred to as "the Jews"). Although many of the expressions used concerned the condemned, the sermon was actually targeted at the Christian spectators. Nearly all of the sermons included didactic statements, a varied mixture of theological doctrines concerning divine nature, the incarnation and the death of Jesus, and objections directed against the Jews. Arguments that expressed the superiority of Christianity over Judaism were employed to strengthen the Old Christians' faith rather than to convert heretics. These sermons, which included elements of propaganda, were also supposed to influence social conceptions and attitudes concerning Jewish matters.

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<sup>4</sup> Marques 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Guerra 1998: 96.

<sup>6</sup> Pires 1989: 271.

<sup>7</sup> *Sermões impressos dos autos da fé*, edited by Rosemarie Erika Horch, Rio de Janeiro 1969: 294–295.

<sup>8</sup> Saraiva 1985: 109.

One of the major objectives of the sermons delivered during autos-da-fé was to justify the essential role of the Inquisition as the guardian of the Catholic faith, and to emphasize its majesty and power as “*the sword of justice and the olive branch of mercy for penitents*.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, both Friar António de Sousa and Padre Diogo Andrade stress the role of inquisitors as a defense against the harmful influence of Judaism, and compare them to shepherds who “*all the time protect their herds from wolves*.”<sup>10</sup> Hence, every activity directed against the Inquisition related to the whole of Christendom as well.<sup>11</sup> In order to defend Christ’s sheepfold in a proper way, they argued, inquisitors ought not only to be enlightened and educated, but also “numerous” so as to combat the increasing number of heretics.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the auto-da-fé sermons comprised a certain form of prevention against criticisms of the activity and methods of the Holy Office.

As previously stated, the purpose of such sermons was to strengthen their audiences’ Christian faith; therefore, arguments related to the supremacy of their religion over all others were commonplace. Padre Aires de Almeida explained that the age of Jewish “supremacy” ended at the time of Christ’s death, claiming that, “*(Christ) was buried together with the Synagogue but only He was raised from the death whereas the Jews lost everything*.”<sup>13</sup> De Almeida argued that if the Jewish faith was true, no one would have abandoned its practices as they were observed at the time of Christ. If Judaism was the only way to redemption, therefore, the New Christians would not attain it since they had publicly left the faith.<sup>14</sup> According to Friar Ambrósio de Jesus, Christians inherited both the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem, because when the Jews were expelled from that city, “*the Emperor Hadrian decided that the town belonged to the Christians and banned the Jews from entering it*.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Friar António de Sousa claimed an “obligation” to spread among the Jews the doctrine that the Son of God became a man, came to earth to redeem the world, and that Jesus is the Messiah. However, de Sousa simultaneously expresses his view that the Jews remained “*deaf as a stone*” to the voice of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> Friar Filipe Morteira’s fundamental argument claimed that the coming of Christ ended the Old Covenant, and as a result there was no reason for the continued existence of religious Judaism.<sup>17</sup> As a matter of emphasis, the sermons’ authors often referred to extracts from the Old Testament that confirmed the coming of the Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>18</sup>

Officially speaking, the sermons were intended to be one final opportunity for the condemned to convert to the Christian faith, and in this way rescue their souls.<sup>19</sup> However, the sermons’ most visible objective was to convince the Christian spectators of Jewish guilt. The history of the Jewish people was presented in such a way as to empha-

<sup>9</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *Sermam...* (Coimbra 1694), fol. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *Sermão...* (Lisbon 1624), fol. 14; Diogo de Areda, *Sermão...* (Lisbon 1644), fol. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.* fol. 14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *Sermam...* (Coimbra 1621), fol. 7r.

<sup>16</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Phillippe Motreira, *Sermam...* (Lisbon 1645), fol. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Nuno Viegas, *Sermam...* (Lisbon 1640), fol. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Luis Alvres, *Sermam...* (Evora 1672), fol. 4.

size their past magnificence, visible sins, and deserved punishment. “*It is high time to bring the Jewish ingratitude, blindness, punishment and disgrace to light,*” Friar Filipe de Morteira said.<sup>20</sup> De Morteira also emphasized in one sermon, “*There was no curse directed by the Old Christians against you, while your curses against us came to light during many autos da fé.*”<sup>21</sup> This quoted fragment reveals the friar’s own hostile attitude towards the Jews; not all texts included such deep hostility, however. Emphasis was often placed on mistakes and sins of biblical Jews, rather than on their modern offences against Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

It also seems important to explain the meaning and usage of the word “Jew” in these sermons. The Inquisition Tribunal did not officially bother about the Jews or the followers of other religions, with the exception of situations in which they posed a specific threat to the supremacy of Catholic Christianity in a particular region. In such cases, they reasoned, the intervention of the Inquisition was justifiable.<sup>23</sup> None was necessary in Portugal, however, following the passage of a 1496 edict that banned all Jewish and Arab citizens from entering the country, and required those who wished to stay to convert to Christianity and be baptized into the Catholic Church. Notwithstanding this compulsory conversion, however, many persons practiced their religion in hiding. In fact, even though they were called the New Christians and accused of heresy, they became victims of the Inquisition. Crypto-Judaism was one of the significant charges, the so-called *crime major*, which often resulted in a death sentence. To put it simply, the term “Jew” utilized in the sermons related to three disparate groups: the Jewish people of biblical times, the Jewish people of the modern era who openly practiced Judaism outside of Portugal, and as a mental shortcut considering Crypto-Jews. Some sermons distinguished the Jewish people of the modern era and those of biblical times. However, the former group was sometimes applied both to New Christians (still acknowledged by the Portuguese society as Jews) and to the followers of Judaism in other countries. Padre Ambrósio de Jesus described the Jews of the Old Testament as an eminent people, chosen by God, and who were waiting for His coming. The Jews of his time, however, de Jesus dismissed as lost and dead ones.<sup>24</sup> A vast majority of sermon authors addressed the condemned, the New Christians, as if they were the Jews who never acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah (rather than as heretics who had broken the law by converting to the Jewish faith). There are also several texts whose authors distinguished between the Jews and the New Christians, even if they do not use the term “New Christian” in doing so. However, this practice seems to have been uncommon; such distinctions were found only in two out of the ten analyzed sermons. These sorts of distinctions included differentiating between the New Christians (who received the Holy Communion sacrilegiously) and the Jews (who were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ).<sup>25</sup> Friar António de Sousa made a very clear distinction in one of his sermons, describing the New Christians as “*heretics who were baptized in our churches, taught the same Catholic doctrine and as people who*

<sup>20</sup> Phillippe Morteira, *op. cit.*, fol. 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Phillippe Morteira, *op. cit.*, fol. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Rowland 2010: 174.

<sup>24</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 8r–9.

were talking to us, crossing the threshold of a church along with us, attending the same ceremonies, receiving the same sacraments, and it all seems to be false”.<sup>26</sup> In this sermon the New Christians were portrayed as a separate part of the Christendom, one that voluntarily betrayed and abandoned the Catholic faith. In another fragment, the same author writes: “They are neither Jews because they deny their own words or Christians because they have not the Spirit of Christ and they do not believe in Christ our Lord [...] They are Christians outside but Jews in their hearts.”<sup>27</sup>

“Who are these people [...] that you stubbornly dare to question the fulfillment of God’s promises?”<sup>28</sup> Having explained the meaning and usage of the term “Jew”, we can now focus on the characterization and the image of the Jews included in the sermons delivered during autos-da-fé.

Each sermon included many references to the history of the Jewish people. These texts characteristically described this history by contrasting the past splendor of the Jewish people with the misery they dealt with in the present day. The preachers did not deny that the Jews had formerly been God’s chosen people, but they stressed that this period had passed long ago, and that it was the Jews themselves who were solely responsible. The period of the Old Covenant ended when Christ came, the sermonizers argued, and Jews should accept His teachings. Even though they witnessed Jesus’ actions, however, Jews not only refused to convert to Christianity but also brutally killed Jesus.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the preachers argued, the dispersion and persecution of Jews were a justifiable punishment for the murder of God’s Son.<sup>30</sup> Friar Manuel dos Anjos emphasized Jews’ ingratitude for God’s grace with God’s ensuing punishment, which were called “flowers and thorns” respectively. Israel, however, was like “a knight among nations”.<sup>31</sup> Being chosen by the grace of God, it owed Him obedience and worship. Nevertheless, the Jewish people often betrayed God’s will, and as a result He allowed both the demolition of the Temple and the worldwide dispersal of the Jewish people that followed. Since that moment, the preachers claimed, the Jews had become servants of Satan. But God, in His mercy, sent a savior in the person of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> Jesus had revived the dignity of a divine mission on earth, in which Israel participated in the old days but had since lost by its disobedience. The Jews’ jealousy led to hatred for His name, it was argued, and since they had not acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Savior they did not deserve the grace of God.<sup>33</sup> Friar Manuel da Sousa compared modern Jews with a vineyard whose owner (God) waits for fruit not yielded at the proper time.<sup>34</sup> Padre Luisa Alvares made another analogy in his sermon delivered during the auto-da-fé in Évora in 1672. Alvares compared the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews to Cain’s murder of Abel. According to this preacher, the stories’ similarity refers not only to the death of Abel, but also to the punishment imposed by God. In the same way that Cain was shunned, the preacher argued, the Jewish people were also

<sup>26</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 3r.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 3r; Luis Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Manuel dos Anjos, *Sermão...* (Evora 1629), fol. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 4r.

<sup>34</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 3.

expelled from their country and fell into disgrace among other nations.<sup>35</sup> Padre Diogo de Areda also presented the history of Jews in a fascinating way during an auto-da-fé sermon in Goa in 1644. De Areda's text depicted a point of view completely different from the previous ones, and referenced both the realities of modern Jewish life and the history of Jews' presence in Portuguese colonies in the East. According to the author, the Pharisees first crucified Jesus and then sent representatives to many places in order to spread Judaism and prevent the propagation of faith in Christ. These emissaries first reached Ethiopia, and were then directed to India.<sup>36</sup> The Portuguese who had found an ancient Jewish settlement in India were perceived as heralds of the Gospel who announced the end of the Old Covenant when Christ came and as angels who resisted "*the Judea emissaries*."<sup>37</sup> The author of this sermon also warned that if the Jewish people continued their sinful behavior and refused to get closer to God, the only vision for their future would be "*everlasting punishment*."<sup>38</sup> All the authors of the analyzed sermons described Jewish history in order to explain and justify the present situation of the Jews, and to reiterate that the Jews were themselves responsible for the loss of God's grace.<sup>39</sup>

The largest portion of the sermons were devoted to enumerating the sins and faults that Jews had been repeatedly charged with over the centuries; these were defined by Ambrosio de Jesus as "*your superstition, your iniquity, your heresy*".<sup>40</sup> Several "sins" feature most frequently in the sermons. One of the most popular accusations, which concerns both the Jews of Christ's time and all of their descendants, was the claim that "*when the Messiah comes from one side they are heading the other way*," an assertion made in one of de Jesus' sermons.<sup>41</sup> Padre Luís Alvares and Friar António de Sousa claimed that the Jews had not acknowledged Jesus Christ's claim because of their own erroneous concept of the Messiah. The Jews expected him to be a hero of enormous wealth and power, the preachers argued, who would ensure peace and prosperity in the world.<sup>42</sup> The authors emphasized, however, that this view was contradictory to banns proclaimed by several of the prophets of the Old Testament. Alvares and de Sousa similarly accused the Jews of misunderstanding the dynamic nature of redemption.<sup>43</sup> According to Padre Manuela Fagundes, Christ's Jewish contemporaries did not doubt his claim to divinity because His nature directly corresponded with Old Testament descriptions of the Messiah.<sup>44</sup> Jews, sometimes referred to as "People of the Book," were thus also accused of not understanding their own scriptures. Padre Manuel Fagundes described it in the following way: "*The Jews have scriptures that on the one hand allow the Christians to attain redemption and on the other hand lead the Jews to hell*."<sup>45</sup> Padre Ambrósio de Jesus emphasized that parts of the Talmud seemed to recognize the divinity of Jesus, as well as miracles

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<sup>35</sup> Luis Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Diogo de Areda, *Sermão...* (Goa 1644), fol. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Bento de Siqueira, *Sermão...* (Lisbon 1642), fol. 23–25.

<sup>40</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 14r.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 9r.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Luis Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 11–12; Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 6r.

<sup>44</sup> Manuel Fagundes, *Sermão...* (Coimbra 1625), fol. 2–3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 16.

that had been performed in His name. The same author quotes Old Testament writers and specifically appealed to Jewish listeners to heed the words of “*your prophets*.”<sup>46</sup> In this way, preachers sought to stress that the writings of prophets and rabbis that formed the very foundations of Judaism also pointed to Jesus’ divinity. Therefore, it was claimed, the Jews negated their own prophecies when they denied the divinity of Jesus.<sup>47</sup> According to de Jesus, the Jewish scriptures contained the most vital evidence that the Catholic Church could provide Jews: “*Would you ever expect more convincing evidence?*” he demanded.<sup>48</sup> He also referred to St. Augustine’s writings concerning the necessity of convincing Jews that the coming of Jesus was foretold in the Jewish scriptures. This also confirms the veracity of what was written in the Gospel, the authors argued.

The question is raised as to whether this is a case of over-interpretation, or perhaps merely an ingenuous use of wordplay. The word “Messiah” derived from the Hebrew word *mesiah* (מָשִׁיחַ), and the word “Christ” in Greek – *Cristos* (χριστός) – have exactly the same meaning, and may be translated as “*anointed*.” In the culture of ancient Israel, holders of only three public offices were anointed: kings, prophets and clergymen. Christendom adapted the Hebrew term and its Greek equivalent as proper names that concerned Jesus – the Son of God. However, the term “Messiah” from the Old Testament should not be automatically identified with Jesus, since it is one of the possible interpretations but not the only one. Moreover, two different sermon authors surprisingly equated the name Joshua (the successor of Moses) with Jesus.<sup>49</sup> According to preacher’s Nuno Viegas understanding David defeated Goliath with a sword that was inscribed with Joshua’s name. However, he claimed, “*letters tell ‘Joshua’, the Holy Spirit tells ‘Jesus’, who overcame paganism with David’s hands. Jesus thanks to the Holy tribunal prevailed Judaism*.”<sup>50</sup> However, this explanation and method of argumentation are still the cause for controversy. According to some preachers the time and the circumstances of the Messiah’s coming were precisely specified, yet more evidence that the Jews were unable to accurately interpret their own prophecies.<sup>51</sup> In their blindness, it was asserted, the Jews did not comprehend the Kingdom of God’s spiritual dimension.<sup>52</sup> “*People who are attached to earthly matters do not apprehend the Messiah from heaven [...] they have chosen the Earth without God by rejecting God without the Earth*.”<sup>53</sup>

The accusation most frequently lodged against Jews concerned the problem of “Jewish blindness.” Friar Filipe Morteira wondered how it was possible to “*deny such an obvious truth*,”<sup>54</sup> and to “*expect the impossible*” arrival of a Messiah that had already appeared.<sup>55</sup> According to Padre Luis Alvares, “Jewish blindness” stemmed from two key issues: Jews did not identify Jesus as the Messiah, and they did not discern their

<sup>46</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Luis Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Nuno Viegas, *op. cit.*, fol. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Luis Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 6r.

<sup>54</sup> Phillippe Morteira, *op. cit.*, fol. 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*



own mistakes.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Alvares argued, the Jews had not even learned from the divine punishment that they had already received. Friar Nuno Viegas similarly claimed that “Jewish blindness” resulted not from misunderstanding prophecies, but from duplicity and unfaithfulness to God.<sup>57</sup> Padre Ambrósio de Jesus, quoting St. Ambrose, asserted that “Jewish blindness” was like an illness handed down from generation to generation.<sup>58</sup> Padre António de Areda likewise emphasized that this illness was severe and incurable.<sup>59</sup> Areda argued that “Jewish blindness” was the result of habits observed and instilled in childhood; in his opinion, these habits stuck to a person like skin in a way that made it impossible to get rid of them.<sup>60</sup> A single exception to this mindset, however, can be found in the extract from a sermon of Padre Luís Alvares concerning Nicholas of Lyra. The author describes him in the following way: “*Yours by the blood, ours by the faith.*”<sup>61</sup>

The concept of “Jewish blindness” as an incurable illness is incompatible with another accusation leveled against the Jews, the claim that only blind obstinacy and unwillingness prevented them from converting to Catholic Christianity. Despite the visible, divine signs that accompanied life and death, most Jews still refused to convert. Even the testimony of shepherds and kings who recognized the Son of God at His birth, as well as the Roman centurion who converted under the cross, failed to convince the Jews.<sup>62</sup> Modern Jews bore an even heavier burden, it was argued, because they would not change their minds in spite of biblical evidence, innumerable miracles and conversions, and the recorded testimonies of thousands of Christians.<sup>63</sup> Despite this, Padre Ambrósio de Jesus regarded the worship of Jesus offered by faithful Christians all over the world as an undeniable and continuously sustained miracle that even the Jews were unable to deny.<sup>64</sup> It was also argued that the coming of Christ and the beginning of the New Covenant signaled that Judaism had lost its *raison d’être*, a point allegedly proven by the demolition of the Jewish temple. “*By allowing the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the only place where offering a sacrifice was permitted,*” one author argued, “*God shows that He does not desire such sacrifice any more.*”<sup>65</sup> Although the Old Covenant era and the Jewish state were both thus unavoidably ended, the Jews still refused to recognize Jesus Christ as their Messiah.<sup>66</sup> According to some preachers, the Jews stood accused of double betrayal. Not only did they betray God by not acknowledging the divinity of Christ, they also broke the rules of their own religion by cultivating the practices of Judaism in exile.<sup>67</sup> Padre Aires Almeida identified this offense, and professed as a response to worldwide Jewish persecutions: “*but how can people not object to you if you oppose your own law?*”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Luís Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Diogo de Areda, *op. cit.*, fol. 16.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 17.

<sup>61</sup> Luís Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 9–9r.

<sup>63</sup> Luís Alvres, *op. cit.*, fol. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Manuel Fagundes, *op. cit.*, fol. 12.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 6, 12–13.

<sup>68</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 8.

As mentioned earlier, the term “Jew” was also employed in sermons to refer to the New Christians. This group was charged with idolatry, among other accusations. This term, which is explained by Padre Manuel Fagundes in his sermon, means that despite the external conversion “*they still wander*.”<sup>69</sup> As a result, he argued, “*they are present at church, their thoughts are in synagogue, they have Jesus on their lips and the Messiah in their hearts*.”<sup>70</sup> To Fagundes, this made the New Christians even worse than open followers of Judaism, because they participated in religious practices that they did not believe in. Padre Aires de Almeyda called them people deceived by the Devil, because they were neither Christian nor Jewish.<sup>71</sup> The accusation describing Jews as murderers of the Son of God also appeared very often (albeit randomly) in medieval anti-Jewish discourse. According to Padre Luís Alvares, for example, the Jews’ fundamental mistake was not the murder of the Messiah, but their continued refusal to believe in Jesus’ divinity.<sup>72</sup> Apart from accusations of a religious and ideological nature, other Jewish “offences” mentioned by the authors of the sermons included greed and an exaggerated attachment to worldly goods. According to Friar António de Sousa, this kind of behavior hampered Jews’ relationship with God, as well as belief in a Messiah who promises them eternal happiness instead of worldly goods.<sup>73</sup> “*The Jews that pretend to be Christians rob our households, steal our lives and profane our sacraments*,” he claimed.<sup>74</sup> In this way, Jews were also sometimes additionally charged with social and economic offenses.

The authors of the sermons also employed vivid verbal images and expressions to describe and interpret Jewish people’s supposed sins and faults. In a sermon preached in Coimbra in 1625, Padre Aires de Almeida made such strong, direct comparisons, saying: “*You are saying that my father died as a Jew and I want to die like him also as a Jew. You should know that this would have meant: my father went to Hell and I want to go there with him*.”<sup>75</sup> Many sermons included stereotypes from the Old Testament describing Jews as “accomplices of the devil.” These comparisons were not always very obvious, however, nor necessarily literal.

The sermons’ descriptions and expressions concern both the Inquisition’s attitude toward the condemned and the whole of Jewish society in general. In principle, in all the texts the ambiguity of their attitude is visible. On the one hand, there were many accusations made against modern Jews. Their ancestors in the Old Testament were called the “Chosen people,” a people given mercy and a heritage of blessings from God. Indeed, Padre Mestre Bento de Siqueira called Old Testament Jews “*the Christians waiting for Christ, the awaiting Christians*.”<sup>76</sup> As this waiting period passed, however, Christ came. Afterward, the Jews’ ancestors are compared to venomous vipers, because even though they saw Him they still did not believe in Him.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, many authors described the New Testament not only with harsh words, but also with expressions like

<sup>69</sup> Manuel Fagundes, *op. cit.*, fol. 22.

<sup>70</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 8.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Luís Alvares, *op. cit.*, fol. 2.

<sup>73</sup> António de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 12r.

<sup>75</sup> Manuel Fagundes, *op. cit.*, fol. 16.

<sup>76</sup> Bento de Siqueira, *op. cit.*, fol. 21.

<sup>77</sup> Nuno Viegas, *op. cit.*, fol. 11.

“brothers.”<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, signs of mercy were also visible, particularly in references such as “poor you who are orphans with neither a father nor mother over the centuries.”<sup>79</sup> Padre Aires de Almeida expressed concern for the Jews’ redemption, exhorting them to “give more weight to redeem their souls rather than to amass riches.”<sup>80</sup> Indeed, one voice among the ten sermons analyzed even admitted, “It is certainly undeniable that many among the Jewish nation accepted Christianity and retained absolute faith in Christ.”<sup>81</sup>

The way in which such preachers perceived Jews and New Christians’ possibility of obtaining redemption is worth pondering further. In some cases, incompatible views were expressed at different times by the same authors. In one instance, Padre Manuel Fagundes attempted to convince the condemned that they could avoid punishment by conversion.<sup>82</sup> Afterward, however, he claimed that, “the Jews will not go to heaven because they convert not by heart but by word.”<sup>83</sup> Fagundes did not deny the possibility of conversion, but carefully emphasized its difficulty, nothing that “the constant waiting for the Messiah enhances their hatred of Christ and His Law.”<sup>84</sup> “All sorts of means should be used to direct Jews living in this kingdom towards faith,” he proposed.<sup>85</sup> It is worth noting that Fagundes used the verb *reduzir*, which was used to describe all infidels – *reduzidos à fé católica* – who accepted the Catholic faith of their own free will (although for different reasons). In this way, the author is convinced that the Catholic Church’s mission was to direct everyone to conversion. In a perfect world, the Jews would have converted not because of the confiscation of personal properties and public ceremonies, but out of their own free will. If that proved impossible, this line of reasoning dictated, then the Church was forced to threaten people with punishment in order to achieve its aim (that is, universal conversion). Friar Ambrósio de Jesus went so far as to claim that the Jews were condemned, and that damnation was their destiny. The author paraphrased the prophet Isaiah: “God will gather you at the stake because he assigned you to be burned and He will send a fire upon you.”<sup>86</sup> In another passage of his sermon, de Jesus claimed that Jews could not attain redemption because of their own faults. “It is not because the gates to heaven are closed,” he wrote, “but because you do not want to enter them even if they remain open to everyone.”<sup>87</sup> In this way, the preachers’ opinions concerning the possibility of Jewish conversion or redemption were unanimously pessimistic and antagonistic.

Not only was the sermon’s content of utmost importance; its form also played a significant rhetorical role. Sermons provided preachers with an opportunity to display their oratory craftsmanship, knowledge and linguistic skills. In almost all of the texts examined, the authors repeatedly employed many different sorts of rhetorical devices, including similes, metaphors, epithets, wordplays. The results often sounded artificial,

<sup>78</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 14.

<sup>79</sup> Nuno Viegas, *op. cit.*, fol. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ayres de Almeyda, *op. cit.*, fol. 7.

<sup>81</sup> Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 12r.

<sup>82</sup> Manuel Fagundes, *op. cit.*, fol. 23; Antonio de Sousa, *op. cit.*, fol. 5.

<sup>83</sup> Manuel Fagundes, *op. cit.*, fol. 23.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 19.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Ambrosio de Jesu, *op. cit.*, fol. 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 10.

and served chiefly to emphasize the preacher's erudition. Latin quotations, excerpting passages from the Bible, and paraphrasing the Church Fathers (especially St. Augustine), taken together with historic facts, Talmudic passages, and rhetorical deliberations, all provided similar evidence of the authors' knowledge. In particular, references to the Jewish scriptures were utilized to show the preachers' expertise in the subject, as well as their proper preparation for their role. Virtually all of the texts proclaimed similar ideas, presented in various different ways. The resulting work was sometimes a triumph of form over content, one reason that the authors' works are often characteristically described as Baroque. Indeed, some of the texts explicitly employ the Baroque concept (Conceptismo). For instance, Padre Aires de Almeida divided his sermon into three parts. Each section, according to the author, constituted a particular "complaint" against the Jews. The writings of Friar Manuel dos Anjos, by contrast, include the interwoven motifs of "flowers" and "thorns," words used to symbolize the brightest and darkest periods of ancient Jewish history.

In conclusion, the auto-da-fé sermons clearly present how the inquisitors of the Catholic Church attempted to impose its line of thought on the rest of 17th-century Portuguese society. These sermons enable readers to relive to some extent the atmosphere that had little in common with the kind of long-awaited religious unity anticipated in the wake of the Big Conversion. The autos-da-fé not only concerned the condemned persons to whom they were addressed, but also expounded on the Jewish question in a way that inspired a new kind of anti-Jewish social discourse. On the one hand, some anti-Jewish sermons addressed theological disputes and referred to prophetic Old Testament scriptures. Others, meanwhile, employed medieval stereotypes excessively and served merely to enhance popular prejudices. In most cases, however, both of these elements were utilized together in combination. In this way, the sermons reached a wide audience; their message was crafted to convince both the assembled ceremony authorities and representatives of the elite classes, as well as the common people. "*The psychological attitude of a person and the community that he belongs to is controlled, in the face of particular problems, by the collective myths and the religious conceptions that become the norms.*"<sup>88</sup> These conceptions, transferred by the preachers and fueled by the splendor of the auto-da-fé ceremonies, shaped the Christian way of life in Portugal for three centuries. The inquisitors denied the opportunity of the New Christians' complete assimilation in Portuguese society by negating the possibility of genuine Jewish conversion and redemption, which they dismissed as an impossibility. The theatrical character and splendor of autos-da-fé blazed triumphantly, and served to emphasize the authority of the Inquisition. These grand displays also confirmed the correctness of the preachers' anti-Semitic views, which were widely considered to be the only possible truth. In this way, the auto-da-fé sermons help explain the lower classes' hostile attitude, escalated by Catholic clerics' strong anti-Jewish rhetoric, towards the New Christians in 17th-century Portugal.

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<sup>88</sup> Marques 1989: 22.

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